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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 CAIRO 26111

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SUBJ: "NO NASSERISM, ONLY NASSERISTS"

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1. C - ENTIRE TEXT.

2. SUMMARY. "NASSERISM" HAS GAINED PUBLICITY AND TOPICALITY IN RECENT MONTHS (REFTEL), BUT NEITHER A COHERENT IDEOLOGY NOR A BROAD BASED POLITICAL MOVEMENT HAS EMERGED TO GIVE DEFINITION TO THE TERM. THE MOST CREDIBLE ATTEMPT TO FORM A MOVEMENT IS THE SQUARELY ANTI-U.S., ANTI-ISRAEL "ARAB SOCIALIST NASSERIST PARTY" (ASNP), NOW IN THE LEGAL LIMBO OF "PARTY UNDER ESTABLISHMENT." A NEW WEEKLY NASSERIST NEWSPAPER CLAIMS INDEPENDENCE FROM THE ASNP, BUT CLEARLY HAS LINKS TO IT OF DUBIOUS LEGALITY. MUBARAK HAS TOLERATED BUT CAREFULLY CIRCUMSCRIBED THE RE-EMERGENCE OF NASSERIST VISIBILITY. THE NASSERISTS CLEARLY POSE NO IMMEDIATE THREAT TO THE REGIME, AND ARE LOCKED IN HOSTILE COMPETITION WITH ISLAMIC ACTIVISTS IN THE ATTEMPT TO BEND POPULAR ECONOMIC DISSATISFACTION INTO POLITICAL SUPPORT. THE NASSERISTS' PRIMARY SIGNIFICANCE IS THEIR THEORETICAL POTENTIAL TO INCITE OPPOSITION TO ECONOMIC REFORM, ADDING TO MUBARAK'S CAUTION IN ECONOMIC DECISIONS. END SUMMARY.

3. NASSER'S GHOST: REFTEL REPORTED DIVERSE ELEMENTS OF AN APPARENT RE-EMERGENCE OF "NASSERIST " POLITICAL ACTIVITY, NOTABLY: MOHAMMED HASSANEIN HEIKAL'S RE-APPEARANCE IN PRINT; ESTABLISHMENT OF A PLAINLY NASSERIST WEEKLY NEWSPAPER; PROMINENT OFFICIAL COMMEMORATION ON 30TH ANNIVERSARY OF NASSER'S NATIONALIZATION OF THE SUEZ CANAL AND HIS SUBSEQUENT EMERGENCE AS A NATIONAL HERO IN THE 1956 WAR; AND ORGANIZATIONAL ACTIVITIES OF A PROSPECTIVE NEW NASSERIST POLITICAL PARTY. THERE IS LINGERING, PERHAPS EVEN marginally revived POPULAR NOSTALGIA FOR ELEMENTS OF NASSER'S LEGACY. NEVERTHELESS, THIS SELECTIVE NOSTALGIA IS VOICED MAINLY AMONG INTELLECTUALS AND THE LOWER MIDDLE CLASS PUBLIC SECTOR AND GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES, WHO PROSPERED UNDER NASSER. EVEN THE DEMAGOGIC LEFTIST OPPOSITION HAS AVOIDED PROMINENT PLAY OF NASSERISM AND THE BRUIED NASSERIST REVIVAL.

4. MUBARAK AND REVISIONIST NASSERISM: IN HIS SPEECHES IN SEPTEMBER AROUND THE ANNIVERSARY OF NASSER'S DEATH, MUBARAK LAID CLAIM AS THE TRUE HEIR OF NASSERIST NATIONALISM AND INDEPENDENCE FROM SUPERPOWER DOMINATION, BUT DISTINGUISHED HIS OWN APPROACH FROM NASSER'S IN KEY AREAS (PEACE WITH ISRAEL, DEMOCRACY, ECONOMIC REFORM). BESIDES REVISING THE VALUES OF NASSERISM, THE MUBARAK GOVERNMENT IS TOYING WITH THE NEW "NASSERISTS." IT EFFECTIVELY HAS LURED THEM ABOVE GROUND BY PERMITTING PRE-ORGANIZATIONAL POLITICAL ACTIVITIES AND PRESS INTERVIEWS, WHILE ARRESTING SOME ACTIVISTS AND WARNING AT LEAST ONE WOULD-BE LEADER OF THE LIMITS ON HIS ACTIVITIES. THE NASSERISTS ARE THEMSELVES (UNADMITTED) REVISIONISTS, CLAIMING TO PROMINENT PROSPECTIVE RECRUITS THAT THEY HAVE DISCARDED NASSER'S AUTHORITARIANISM. EVIDENTLY THEY RECOGNIZE THAT THE MEMORY OF NASSER'S OPPRESSION ALSO REMAINS VIVID FOR SOME.

5. NASSERISTS VS NASSERISM. NASSER CONFIDANT AND

CHRONICLER MOHAMMED HASSANEIN HEIKAL APTLY HAS CHARGED IN PUBLISHED INTERVIEWS AND PRIVATE CONVERSATIONS THAT THERE IS NO SUCH THING AS "NASSERISM, BUT ONLY NASSERISTS" TAKING PERSONAL INITIATIVES. ABSENT THE GREAT HERO HIMSELF OR A BODY OF SEMINAL PUBLICATIONS TO GUIDE HIS HEIRS, NO COHERENT POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY EXISTS TO UNIFY THEM. COMPETING NASSERISTS ARE ALLEGEDLY ACTIVE IN EACH OF THE ESTABLISHED POLITICAL PARTIES; THE REMNANTS OF THE DORMANT "EGYPT PARTY"; A PROSPECTIVE NEW NASSERIST PARTY; A NEW WEEKLY NEWSPAPER; AND EVEN AMONG ISLAMIC ACTIVISTS. THE TERM "NASSERIST" IS USED LOOSELY AND DISPARAGINGLY: THE FREE-MARKET WAFDISTS, LIBERALS, AND MEMBERS OF THE CONSERVATIVE SIDE OF THE NDP REGULARLY ACCUSE MUBARAK OF TOLERATING NASSERISTS (IF NOT OUTRIGHT MARXISTS) AMONG HIS SENIOR ADVISORS, USING AS EXAMPLES (WITHOUT EXPLANATION) OSAMA AL BAZ AND SPEAKER OF PARLIAMENT RIFA'AT MAHGOUB. THE RIGHT SUSPECTS NEW PM ATIF SIDQI FOR HIS PAST ASSOCIATION WITH NASSER THROUGH MAHGOUB. ONE WELL-CONNECTED, INDEPENDENT POLITICAL SCIENTIST CLAIMED THAT THE NASSERISTS ARE DELIBERATELY PURSUING THEIR OBJECTIVES IN MULTIFARIOUS CHANNELS, NOT QUITE AT ODDS WITH EACH OTHER BUT NOT QUITE COOPERATING EITHER, AS A MEANS TO EVADE GOVERNMENT PRESSURE.

16. FARID ABDEL KARIM AND THE ASNP: THE MOST PROMINENT OF THE NASSER REVIVALISTS -- AND PERHAPS LEAST LIKELY TO FAIL -- IS CONTROVERSIAL LAWYER FARID ABDEL KARIM, THE "DEPUTY" OF THE NEW "ARAB SOCIALIST NASSERIST PARTY" (ASNP). THE ASNP IS NOW IN THE LEGAL LIMBO DEFINED AS "UNDER ESTABLISHMENT." THAT GIVES THE ASNP THE DISADVANTAGES OF BEING OUT IN THE OPEN, AND HENCE EASY MONITORING BY THE GOVERNMENT -- WITHOUT THE ADVANTAGES THAT GO WITH BEING COMPLETELY LEGAL: HAVING A REGULAR PUBLIC VOICE (SEE PARA 8), OR UNRESTRICTED ORGANIZATIONAL ACTIVITIES. ABDEL KARIM TOLD POLOFF THAT THERE ARE ONLY TWO IMPORTANT POLITICAL FORCES IN EGYPT TODAY: NASSERISM AND ISLAM, NEITHER OF WHICH ARE REPRESENTED BY POLITICAL PARTIES. ABDEL KARIM CLAIMS THE NASSERISTS BELIEVE IN TRUE DEMOCRACY, AND THAT THE GOVERNMENT SHOULD PERMIT ALL THOSE DESIRING POLITICAL PARTIES TO FORM THEM. IN THIS CASE, THE ISLAMIC ELEMENTS WOULD QUICKLY LOSE THEIR POPULARITY IN THEIR FRACTIOUSNESS. ON THE OTHER HAND, THE OVERWHELMING POPULAR SUPPORT FOR NASSERISM -- ABDEL KARIM CLAIMS 100,000 FOUNDING MEMBERS -- WOULD ASSURE THE PRIMACY OF HIS PARTY. ABDEL KARIM SAID THE ASNP AIMS NOT TO TAKE POWER, BUT TO UNITE THE NASSERISTS ONLY TO LEAD THE LEGITIMATE OPPOSITION THROUGH PEACEFUL MEANS. HE PROFESSED SATISFACTION AT THE RECENT GOVERNMENT PRESSURE ON HIMSELF AND OTHER NASSERISTS, CLAIMING THAT THIS IS A POWERFUL UNIFYING FACTOR. HE EXPLAINED THAT HE USES THE TITLE "DEPUTY" ("WAKEEL") -- ALTHOUGH HE IS THE FOUNDER AND LEADER OF THE NEW PARTY, BECAUSE NO FORMAL ELECTION OF A PRESIDENT CAN BE HELD UNTIL THE PARTY EMERGES FROM "UNDER ESTABLISHMENT."

17. FOREIGN POLICY: AS IN HIS PUBLISHED INTERVIEWS, ABDEL KARIM MADE CLEAR THAT TWO KEY ELEMENTS OF ASNP POLICY ARE OPPOSITION TO U.S. "INFLUENCE" IN EGYPT AND TO PEACEFUL EGYPTIAN-ISRAELI TIES. HE CHARGED US PRESSURE IS THE PRIMARY REASON THAT THE GOVERNMENT STILL HAS NOT PERMITTED FULL ESTABLISHMENT OF THE ASNP AND HAS SUSPENDED ITS PUBLICATION, "AL ISHTIRAKI", AFTER ONLY TWO ISSUES (PHOTOCOPIES POUCHED INR). NONETHELESS, HE WELCOMED THE OPPORTUNITY FOR A DIALOGUE, AND CLAIMED MANY PERSONAL FRIENDSHIPS WITH AMERICANS. HE ALSO IMPLIED THAT HE OPPOSES U.S. INFLUENCE IN EGYPT PRIMARILY BECAUSE OF HIS MANIFEST HATRED FOR ISRAEL, RATHER THAN FOR ANY PURELY NATIONALIST OR IDEOLOGICAL MOTIVATION. ABDEL KARIM DENIED LINKS BETWEEN THE NASSERISTS AND QADDAFI, CHARGING THAT QADDAHFI IS NASSERISM'S WORST ENEMY. HE SAID QADDAHFI SEEKS ALLIANCE WITH NASSERISM TO DOMINATE IT, BUT THE NASSERISTS REFUSE HIS BLANDISHMENTS.

18. "SAWT AL ARAB": AN EXAMPLE OF THE CONFUSED AND COMPETING RELATIONSHIPS AMONG LEADING NASSERIST LIGHTS IS THE CASE OF THE RECENTLY ESTABLISHED "SAWT AL ARAB" NEWSPAPER AND ITS FOUNDER-EDITOR, ABDEL AZIM MANAF, WHO HAS AVOIDED EMBASSY CONTACT. HEIKAL (FOR ONE) DENIED THAT "SAWT AL ARAB" IS A NASSERIST ORGAN, CHARGING (AS DO MANY OF OUR INTERLOCUTORS) THAT MANAF IS ON THE LIBYAN PAYROLL. ONE OF MANAF'S FORMER UNIVERSITY MENTORS SAID MANAF IS A "FANATIC," BUT FIRMLY DENIED THE PREVALENT BELIEF THAT MANAF GETS LIBYAN FUNDING, CLAIMING SAWT AL ARAB IS INSTEAD SUPPORTED BY THE SONS OF NASSER. FOR HIS PART, FARID ABDEL KARIM DENIES LINKS WITH MANAF OR HIS NEWSPAPER; HE ALSO DENIES THAT MANAF HAS POLITICAL CONNECTIONS WITH LIBYA OR THE SONS OF NASSER. THE OFFICE OF SAWT AL ARAB ALSO DENIES CONNECTIONS WITH ABDEL KARIM'S ASNP, ALTHOUGH THE PAPER HEAVILY COVERS ABDEL KARIM AND TOUTS A NASSERIST LINE. THE PRACTICAL BUT UNOFFICIAL LINK BETWEEN THE ASNP AND SAWT AL ARAB IS DARING, BECAUSE UNTIL THE ASNP IS FORMALLY ESTABLISHED IT MAY NOT LEGALLY PUBLISH A REGULAR NEWSPAPER. MININT ZEKI BADR COULD CLOSE BOTH ORGANIZATIONS AT HIS PLEASURE ON THIS LEGAL BASIS.

19. COMMENT. WE DETECT NO CONSENSUAL UNDERSTANDING OF WHAT THE TERM "NASSERISM" MEANS, AND NO POPULAR BASIS FOR A REVIVAL OF NASSERISM AS A POLITICAL MOVEMENT, PARTICULARLY IN THE ABSENCE OF A SIMILARLY CHARISMATIC NATIONAL HERO. AS HEIKAL SUGGESTED, THE ESSENCE OF NASSERISM, AND THAT FOR WHICH SOME NOSTALGIA REMAINS, WAS THE MAN AND HIS IMAGE, RATHER THAN ANY COHERENT BODY OF IDEAS. MANY PUBLIC SECTOR WORKERS AND GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES PROBABLY DO SHARE LEFTIST INTELLECTUALS' RESENTMENT AT THE PERCEIVED U.S. PRESSURE ON MUBARAK AND HIS GOVERNMENT TO ADOPT ECONOMIC MEASURES THEY CONSIDER INIMICAL TO THEIR INTERESTS. MANY EGYPTIANS NO DOUBT ALSO SHARE THE NASSERISTS' BITTER ANTI-ISRAELI ATTITUDES, BUT SUCH ATTITUDES ARE ALSO HELD BY ISLAMIC OPPONENTS OF NASSERISM, AND DO NOT DETERMINE AN INDIVIDUAL'S IDENTIFICATION AS A "NASSERIST." THE CHIEF IMPLICATION OF LATTER DAY NASSERISM FOR U.S. INTERESTS IS ITS POTENTIAL TO DIMINISH POPULAR SUPPORT, OR AT LEAST TOLERANCE, FOR THE ECONOMIC REFORMS REQUIRED FOR EGYPTIAN STABILITY. THEY LACK ORGANIZATION AND MASS APPEAL, SO THEIR EFFECTIVENESS IN ACTUALLY INCITING THE PEOPLE AGAINST ECONOMIC REFORMS PROBABLY WOULD BE ONLY marginally INCREASED IF THEY EVENTUALLY ARE PERMITTED TO FORM A LEGITIMATE PARTY (OR PARTIES) UNDER THE CURRENT INFORMAL LEADERSHIP. END COMMENT.

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